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Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Statement submitted by the International Alliance of Women - Equal Rights, Equal Responsibilities, International Council of Women, Soroptimist International and Women's International Democratic Federation, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I

Arab Lawyers Union, Associated Country Women of the World, International Abolitionist Federation, International Commission of Jurists (ICS), International Council of Jewish Women, International Federation of Human Rights, International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, International Federation of Women Lawyers, International Movements for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples (UFER), Socialist International Women (SIW), Women's International Zionist Organisation and World Union of Catholic Womens' Organizations, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category II

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 23 and 24 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

1. The above-mentioned non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council believe that a major factor affecting understanding and effective policy in advancing the status of women is the failure to recognize that an essential economic contribution is missing from basic national account statistics. This is the contribution that stems from the unpaid sector, whether it be household production or the economic outcome of work in the informal sector. This discrepancy was identified by the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women 1/ and by Commission resolution 33/5, "Work in the informal and unpaid sectors". 2/

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* E/1990/30.

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2. Unpaid work, largely undertaken by women, has been an invisible factor in national accounts. It has become clear, however, that the use of biased indicators omitting much of the productive work undertaken by both women and men leads to an unrealistic picture of a nation's economy and to the poor use of the country's human resources. Both men and women are handicapped by national accounts which leave out an assessment of the contribution made by the informal and household sectors of society. The result is that national investment is distorted and consequently sustainable development seriously impeded.

3. Over the past year, the principles embodied in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, 1/ have become more widely recognized, in particular in draft resolution XIII recommended by the Commission on the Status of Women for adoption by the Council, 3/ Commission resolution 33/5, and the report of the Second ECE/INSTRAW Joint Meeting on Statistics of Women held at Geneva from 13 to 16 November 1989 (CES/AC.60/45), as well as in the work of national Governments and private researchers world wide.

4. An essential stage towards success should be the implementation of the 1982 and 1987 International Labour Organisation recommendations on labour force statistics and the classification of occupations to ensure the complete enumeration of the economic activity of women and men. This information must also include unpaid family work in the informal and agricultural sectors; those who support their families through subsistence agriculture activities, and those who engage in a range of activities for their own gain in the informal economic sector.

5. It is therefore encouraging to note that at its twenty-fifth session, the Statistical Commission stressed the need to improve understanding of women's roles in the economy, to rectify inequities in women's economic situations and to provide a more accurate and comprehensive basis for social and economic planning. We also note that the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fourth session recommended that:

> "they [Governments and/or appropriate parties] should also take concrete steps to measure the economic value of women's unpaid work with a view to taking it into account in national policies by 1995.
>
> "The United Nations system should complete work on methodological aspects of measuring pay inequities between women and men, unpaid work and work in the informal sector and should publish studies of countries where such measurements have been made." 4/

6. We therefore urge all of the concerned national and international organizations, with the Statistical Commission and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat as the focal point, to co-operate in the urgent implementation of their commitment to resolve outstanding problems to provide the total picture of production in national accounts essential for effective policy-making and to appropriate investment, which will then reflect the needs of the total population.

7. We welcome the proposed changes in the Revised System of National Accounts. We urge, however, that sufficiently detailed clasifications, accounts and tables be

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recommended to meet planning needs that take women's activities fully into account, the key factor being what men and women are actually doing in the household sector. We therefore underline the importance of subsectoring within the household to identify the informal non-agricultural and small-scale subsistence agriculture sectors as the logical means to success in assessing female economic activity.

8. In this regard we ask for concerted action to be taken so that the Revised System of National Accounts, with supplementary accounts include the necessary measurements and that both the United Nations system and the national Governments provide the resources necessary for implementation.

Notes

1/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A, para. 120.

2/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1989, Supplement No. 9 (E/1989/27/Rev.1-E/CN.6/1989/11/Rev.1) chap. I, sect. A.

3/ See E/1990/25-E/CN.6/1990/11), chap. I, sect. A. The final report will be issued as Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1990, Supplement No. 5 (E/1990/25).

4/ Ibid., draft resolution XIII, recommendation V.

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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Statement submitted by the Four Directions Council, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category II

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 23 and 24 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

* E/1990/30.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

1. The proposal for proclaiming an international year for indigenous peoples has a long history in the United Nations system. The Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Mr. José R. Martínez Cobo, in his study of the problem of discrimination against indigenous populations, recommended the proclamation of an international year of the world's indigenous populations in 1992, to mark the 500th anniversary of the historic contact between Europeans and the indigenous peoples of the Americas (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1986/7/Add.4, Part III, para. 633).

2. The Sub-Commission endorsed this recommendation in its resolution 1987/15 of 2 September 1987. The Commission on Human Rights agreed that such a year should be proclaimed, not necessarily in 1992, but "when appropriate" (Commission resolution 1988/58 of 9 March 1988). The Economic and Social Council recommended that the General Assembly, at an appropriate time, proclaim an international year of the world's indigenous populations (Council resolution 1988/37 of 27 May 1988).

3. The Sub-Commission took the matter up once again at its fortieth session, and in its resolution 1988/19 of 1 September 1988 recommended that "an international year for indigenous rights should be proclaimed to coincide with the end of the Second Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination in 1993".

4. Sub-Commission resolution 1989/36 of 1 September 1989 transmitted detailed recommendations to the Commission on Human Rights concerning possible aims and administrative arrangements for an "International Year for Indigenous Rights" to commence at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly. At the same time, the Sub-Commission entrusted two of its members, Mr. Asbjørn Eide and Ms. Christy Mbonu, with the task of preparing a working paper on possible United Nations activities for an international year for indigenous rights. The Commission responded by endorsing, in principle, that the General Assembly proclaim an International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples (Commission decision 1990/112).

5. Bearing these considerations in mind, we propose the adoption by the Council of the following resolution:

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling that its resolution 1988/37 of 27 May 1988 recommended that the General Assembly should, when appropriate, proclaim an international year of the world's indigenous populations,

Taking note that the Commission on Human Rights, by its decision 1990/112 of 7 March 1990, has recommended that the Economic and Social Council recommend that the General Assembly proclaim an International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples, in 1993 or another appropriate year,

Guided by resolutions 1987/15 of 2 September 1987, 1988/18 of 1 September 1988, and 1989/36 of 1 September 1989, of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, as to the possible themes, aims, and administrative arrangements for such a year,

Believing that such an international year could serve as a basis for mobilizing and co-ordinating the work of the United Nations system in furtherance of the social and economic development of indigenous peoples,

Believing also that the proposed international year satisfies the guidelines for future international years contained in its resolution 1980/67 of 25 July 1980,

Recommends the adoption of the following draft resolution by the General Assembly:

"The General Assembly,

"Recalling resolution 1982/34 of 7 May 1982 of the Economic and Social Council, establishing annually a working group on indigenous populations with a mandate to review developments in this field, with a view to the development of standards,

"Recalling also its resolution 40/131 of 13 December 1985, which established a United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations to contribute to the future promotion and protection of human rights in that field,

"Noting the adoption, by the International Labour Organisation, of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, No. 169 (1989),

"Bearing in mind the reports of the United Nations seminar on the effects of racism and racial discrimination on social and economic relations between indigenous peoples and states (E/CN.4/1989/22), and of the Global Consultation on the right to development as a human right (E/CN.4/1990/9), which drew attention to the close relationship between the development process and the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous people,

"1. Proclaims 1993 the International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples, to commence at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly;

"2. Invites the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to recommend specific and practical activities which might be undertaken by the United Nations, within existing resources, and by Member States, the specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, with the aim of strengthening international co-operation with indigenous peoples in the fields of human rights, development, and the environment;

"3. Authorizes the Secretary-General to accept and administer voluntary contributions from Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for the purpose of augmenting the programme of activities of the International Year;

"4. Requests the Secretary-General to co-ordinate the programme of activities of the International Year, through the Centre for Human Rights."

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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Statement submitted by Amnesty International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category II

The Secretariat has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 23 and 24 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

* E/1990/30 and Corr.1.

Abolition of the death penalty

1. Amnesty International is unconditionally opposed to the death penalty on the grounds that it violates the fundamental human right to life and the right not to be subjected to torture or any other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

2. Since the last report of the Secretary-General on capital punishment, 1/ the death penalty has been abolished for all offences in nine countries: in Australia (1985); the Philippines, Haiti, Liechtenstein and the German Democratic Republic (1987); Cambodia, New Zealand and Romania (1989); and most recently in the newly independent State of Namibia. 2/ As at the present time, Amnesty International's research shows that over 47 per cent of all countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. Amnesty International regards these developments as an encouraging sign that the reaffirmation of the General Assembly in resolution 32/61 concerning the desirability of abolition of the death penalty is being heeded.

3. Abolition of the death penalty, or its restriction, is also under discussion in a number of countries. For example, a bill to be submitted to the parliament of Ireland would result in abolition, as would similar bills in Belgium and Chile. In Sao Tome and Principe a new constitution abolishing the death penalty is to be submitted for approval to the electorate in a referendum, while in Mozambique a draft constitution which would also provide for abolition was published recently. In Czechoslovakia, the cabinet has called for abolition of the death penalty. In February 1990, the President of South Africa announced that all executions were being suspended while parliament considered proposals for the restriction of the death penalty. Legislation which would restrict the scope of the death penalty was published in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in December 1988.

4. On 15 December 1989, in resolution 44/128, the General Assembly adopted the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the first treaty of world-wide scope aimed at abolition of the death penalty. In so doing, Amnesty International believes that the international community has affirmed that the death penalty is not simply a question of national criminal policy but also a matter of human rights. At a regional level, the Sixth Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, providing for abolition of the death penalty in peace-time, has been ratified by 14 States members of the Council of Europe and signed by 3 others.

5. Despite these positive developments, recourse to the death penalty remains frequent. Amnesty International has learned that 2,229 prisoners were executed in 34 countries in 1989 and that some 2,826 death sentences were imposed in 62 countries during the same period. The actual totals of executions and death sentences world wide are certainly higher, although a small number of countries account for the majority of the executions Amnesty International has recorded. Complete statistics are not available because many executions are still carried out in secret and, despite the appeal by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1989/64, all Governments do not publish information about the use of the death penalty.

6. The safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, which were adopted by the Economic and Social Council in 1984 (resolution 1984/50, annex), have been violated regularly. In a number of countries special courts are empowered to pass death sentences, often with no right of appeal to a higher tribunal. Legal assistance for prisoners facing capital charges is often inadequate. Prisoners under 18 years of age at the time of the offence have been executed in a few countries since 1985. Despite the safeguards specifying that the death penalty should be limited to "the most serious crimes ... with lethal or other extremely grave consequences", persons executed in recent years include those accused of a range of offences which incurred no loss of life; in some instances those executed were involved only in non-violent political activity.

7. Respect for these minimum safeguards would reduce considerably the number of executions now carried out. The safeguards do not, however, resolve the problems inherent in capital punishment: human uncertainty and arbitrary judgement are factors which may affect all judicial decisions, yet execution as a punishment is irrevocable; all criminal justice systems are vulnerable to discrimination and the death penalty is used disproportionately against the poor and the disadvantaged; whatever method used, the execution of a human being involves acute physical and mental suffering. Information on the application of the death penalty is contained in a world-wide survey published by Amnesty International in April 1989, When the State Kills ... The Death Penalty v. Human Rights.

8. Other recent research on the use of the death penalty has yielded significant findings. The report on the death penalty prepared for the Committee on Crime Prevention and Control in 1988 3/ revealed that the relation between the death penalty and homicide rates "has failed to provide scientific proof that executions have a greater deterrent effect than life imprisonment. Such proof is unlikely to be forthcoming. The evidence as a whole still gives no positive support to the deterrent hypothesis".

9. Amnesty International hopes that these findings on the use of the death penalty will be taken into consideration in the discussions on this question within the United Nations. Amnesty International urgently appeals to the international community to take further measures to promote a world without executions.

Notes

1/ E/1985/43 and Corr.1 and Add.1.

2/ The Constitution of Namibia specifies in chap. 3, art. 6: "The right to life shall be respected and protected. No law may prescribe death as a competent sentence. ... No executions shall take place in Namibia."

3/ E/AC.57/1988/CRP.7.

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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Statement submitted by the American Association of Jurists, Arab Organization for Human Rights, International Commission of Health Professionals for Health and Human Rights, International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples, Pax Romana (International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs) (International Movement of Catholic Students), Service, Justice and Peace in Latin America and World Student Christian Federation, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category II, and International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretariat has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 23 and 24 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

* E/1990/30 and Corr.1.

Enhancement of human rights in the regions

1. Owing to the momentous change occurring in East-West relations, it is to be hoped that the enormous resources which are to be released by disarmament policies - logical consequence of détente - will be used for the promotion of development, the eradication of hunger and poverty, the fight against disease and illiteracy, the improvement of urban and rural housing, the protection of the environment, the strengthening of social services, the creation of new opportunities for work and the like.

2. The promotion of development entails the establishment, reinforcement and enhancement of democracy, respect of the rights of the human person and of peoples, as well as genuine popular participation at all levels of political, economic and social life.

3. Within the United Nations system, it is necessary to plan a redistribution of human and financial resources in order to take account of this new outlook.

4. It is, for instance, necessary to enlarge the scope of the human rights field: its part in the United Nations budget - which amounts to less than 1 per cent ($US 16,900,000 out of $US 1,790,000,000 for the biennium 1988-1989) - must be substantially increased, as well as the staff allocation.

5. It is necessary to point out that the global budget of the United Nations is relatively modest: less than one thousandth of what the countries of the world spend on armaments. Furthermore, the amount of the 1988-1989 budget shows an increase of little more than 1 per cent compared with the preceding one, and is thus smaller in real terms.

6. In December 1989, the United Nations General Assembly resolved to increase the number of members of the Commission on Human Rights according to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, with a view to improving the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and it recommended that the Economic and Social Council give effect to this decision at its first regular session of 1990.

7. The non-governmental organizations listed above are deeply convinced that the decision of the Assembly is judicious and timely and that the Economic and Social Council should, in order to increase the ease and efficiency of the work of the Commission on Human Rights divide the present six-week annual session of the Commission into two semi-annual sessions of four weeks each, to be held by rotation in cities of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe (for this purpose, the whole of Europe and North America would be considered one region).

8. During each of its two semi-annual sessions, the Commission would examine the situations in the countries of the region in which the session is held, as well as in countries of one of the other regions. The other items would be equitably distributed between the two semi-annual sessions.

9. Moreover, this system would have the enormous advantage of facilitating, successively in each region, the travel of members and observers, bringing the Commission nearer to local realities and, reciprocally, enabling the peoples of the various regions to have closer contact with the Commission. From the political, moral and educational points of view, such a move would be of invaluable benefit to the validity, consolidation and development of human rights and fundamental freedoms.